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Inside Information

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NEW USDA INFORMATION DIRECTOR NAMED

Claude W. Gifford has been named director of USDA's Office of Information. He had been deputy director for publishing and visual communications.

He succeeds acting information director Earl G. Cox, who resigned for health reasons. Gifford had previously served as director of information and as acting assistant secretary for governmental and public affairs.

Earlier this year Gifford received USDA's distinguished service award and just recently was named "professional of the year" by the Organization of Professional Employees of the Department of Agriculture.

He joined USDA in June 1971 as its director of information and served in that position until the Office of Information was reorganized in 1977.

Gifford grew up on a farm near Rock Island, Ill., and graduated with high honors in agricultural economics and journalism from Iowa State University.

After serving as assistant extension editor at the University of Illinois, Gifford joined FARM JOURNAL in 1948 and became economics editor, farm policy editor and director of the magazine's editorial page.

In 1968 he helped plan and launch TOP OP, a management magazine published by FARM JOURNAL, and served as its economics editor until he joined USDA.

Wilmer Mizell, assistant secretary for governmental and public affairs, who made the announcement of Gifford's appointment, said: "Fortunately, we have someone of Claude Gifford's caliber to provide leadership at this time."

EXTENSION INFORMATION DIRECTOR HONORED

Ovid Bay, director of information and communications for USDA's Extension Service, received the "Professional Award" from the Agricultural Communicators in Education at the ACE national conference. The award is the highest given by the association "for excellence and professionalism as an agricultural communicator."

NEW COSDA OFFICERS ELECTED

Communication Officers of State Departments of Agriculture meeting in Des Moines last week elected new officers to serve their organization.

The new COSDA officers are: President -- Mark Randal, press secretary, Illinois Department of Agriculture; 1st Vice President -- June Brotherton, public affairs director, North Carolina Department of Agriculture; 2nd Vice President -- Mal Boright, information and education chief, Vermont Department of Agriculture; Treasurer -- Lana Dickson, public relations director, New Mexico Department of Agriculture; Secretary -- Lori Keyser, public information officer, North Dakota Department of Agriculture; and Newsletter Editor -- John Valterza, information specialist, Oregon Department of Agriculture.

The new officers were elected at the annual COSDA meeting/workshop, hosted by the Iowa Department of Agriculture's information officer, Wayne Messerly.

Messerly also is the immediate past president of COSDA.

U.S. AG COMMUNICATORS' CONGRESS PLANNED

Plans for the 1984 U.S. Agricultural Communicators' Congress are beginning to take shape, according to the Congress Planning Committee.

The Congress will be held June 24-27 in the Marriott's new "flagship" hotel in Washington, D.C. About 400 rooms are being reserved for attendees.

Five agricultural communicators' organizations are sponsoring the event, first of its kind ever held: American Agricultural Editors' Association, Agricultural Communicators in Education, Agricultural Relations Council, Cooperative Editorial Association and National Association of Farm Broadcasters.

Other agricultural communicators' organizations have been invited to be cooperator groups. An advantage to members of sponsoring and cooperating organizations is a reduced registration fee for the Congress.

The Communication Officers of State Departments of Agriculture voted to be a participating organization and will hold its annual meeting in conjunction with the Congress next summer. Four of the sponsoring organizations also will hold their annual or summer meetings in conjunction with the Congress, some holding workshop sessions either immediately before or after the Congress.

The President of the United States and major presidential candidates will be invited to address the Agricultural Communicators' Congress. U.S. Congressional leaders, foreign economic and political leaders, and leaders in the communications and information technology fields will be invited to speak.

A reception is being planned the first evening (Sunday) at one of the foreign embassies for attendees and their spouses. Another evening event for families would be a twilight cruise down the Potomac River to Mount Vernon, with dining on board or on the lawn of the first U.S. President's home.

Paul Weller, president of Agri/Washington and an ARC member, is chairman of the Congress planning committee. Members of the committee from USDA are Claude Gifford (ARC), USDA Director of Information; Stan Prochaska (ACE), USDA Deputy Director of Information; Jim Johnson (ACE), USDA Radio & Television Chief; and Pat Duffey (CEA), USDA Agricultural Cooperative Service. Other members are Layne Beaty (NAFB), retired USDA Radio-TV Chief; Ray Wilkerson (NAFB), WRAL-TV and Tobacco Radio Network, Raleigh, N.C.; Ralph Wennblom (AAEA), Farm Journal; and Jack Pitzer (AAEA), Future Farmers of America.

Members of the Congress Steering Committee are: Don Collins (ARC) and Tom Waldinger (ARC), both from The Fertilizer Institute; Larry Quinn (ACE), USDA Video & Film Division Chief; Jim Webster (ACE), Webster Communications (and former USDA assistant secretary); and Jim Mills (NAFB), National Association of Farm Broadcasters.

"HOW TO GET INFORMATION" DISTRIBUTED

The yellow pages of USDA, "How to Get Information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture," have been updated and distributed.

Already, however, a change should be noted in the October revision -- on the first page, the Director, Office of Information, is now Claude W. Gifford (replacing Earl G. Cox).

For the first time, the listing carries electronic mail boxes on the Dialcom system (used by the Office of Information, the Secretary's Press Office and most agency information offices).

Also, for the first time, agency Freedom of Information Act officers are listed, as well as the new coordinating FOIA officer in the Office of Information's Special Programs Division.

Additional copies of "How to Get Information" are available from Nancy Bevis, Room 458-A, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. Or call (202) 447-7454 or send EM request to AGR001.

JOB OPENINGS IN KENTUCKY & TEXAS

The Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service has openings for two communication specialists at the University of Kentucky at Lexington.

One person will work in the press section, writing news releases and feature stories. The other person will work in the publications section, editing energy, foods and nutrition publications.

Anyone interested may call the Department of Public Information at (606) 257-4736 for details (or by electronic mail to AGS950). Deadline is Nov. 15.

USDA's Soil Conservation Service is seeking an editor (GS-1082-9 or 11) for its South National Technical Center at Fort Worth, Tex.

The person will edit soil survey manuscripts for publication in compliance with federal writing standards and ensure that published soil surveys conform to acceptable formats.

Contact the chief of the Employment Branch, Soil Conservation Service, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013 (room 6219-S). Or call (202) 447-2631. Deadline is Oct. 31.

NATIONAL MEDIA CONFERENCE SCHEDULED

"Change!" is the theme for the 5th annual National Media Conference in New York City, Dec. 6-7.

The two-day event, sponsored by the International Association of Business Communicators, will focus on the sweeping changes impacting media and the future role of the successful public affairs professional.

At the conference, 50 key editors, broadcasters and other media professionals will provide first-hand slants on where the media is heading in the mid-eighties.

"The next few years will demand more skillful communicators and more finely tuned approaches to meet the needs of a fast-changing society and an increasingly competitive marketplace," says the IABC brochure.

"It will be smart strategies rather than big budgets that will determine success. Innovation and insight will be the prime characteristics for successful public information in the next few years."

The registration fee for the National Media Conference is \$525 unless you are a member of either IABC or PRSA. For further information, call Karen Devoti, Conference Coordinator, at (212) 935-9262.

"USDA ONLINE" CONTENT EXPANDING

USDA's electronic news and information dissemination service, USDA ONLINE, has been expanded in recent months to include additional news items and services.

The computerized service, begun in January 1982, is offered through the computer time-sharing services of ITT Dialcom Incorporated, under contract with USDA's Office of Information.

Recent additions to the USDA ONLINE menu are USDA agency regional news releases and the daily executive news summary, "AGa.m." The latter is a 2-page digest of agricultural-related news stories and editorials carried by newswires, key national newspapers, news and farm magazines, newsletters, etc., and is prepared before 8:30 a.m. (Eastern Time) by USDA's News Division.

USDA ONLINE was started as a test of disseminating national news releases through computers to some USDA agency regional information offices, some land grant university agricultural information offices and a couple of state department of agriculture information offices.

Since then other information has been added to the USDA ONLINE menu: Crop report highlights, outlook and situation summaries, roundup of world production and trade, foreign crop circulars, U.S. crop and livestock reports, economic research report abstracts and the weekly "Farm Paper Letter" newsletter.

Most menu items can be keyword searched or the headings scanned in order to make selections before reading.

A feature of the regional news menu item is that each release must contain the name(s) of the state(s) affected by the action reported. Therefore, the reader can call up "USDA", then "RNEWS", then "SEARCH" and then enter the name of the state or states (an "or" between each state name wanted) in which you are interested. Then simply read those headings specified following the command "READ".

The regional news (RNEWS) category will expand as more USDA agencies enter their regional news releases into the system. The Agricultural Marketing Service was the first agency to make its regional releases available through USDA ONLINE.

Proposals have been made and discussed about the addition of news releases from land grant university agricultural information offices (since all are now using the ITT Dialcom system) and state departments of agriculture.

If the proposals were adopted, the two menu items would likely be "LGUNews" and "SDANews".

Any comments concerning these proposals would be welcomed by USDA's Office of Information. Send to Stan Prochaska, deputy director for current information, electronic mailbox AGR002.

ANNUAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE VIA TELEPHONE

USDA's 60th annual Agricultural Outlook Conference will be held in Washington, D.C., Oct. 31-Nov.3.

For the first time in the conference history, a "900" telephone line service will provide live access to speeches given in the major conference rooms.

To access the speeches, call 900-410-JEFF, for presentations in USDA's Jefferson Auditorium, 900-410-104A for presentations in USDA's conference room 104A and 900-410-FORR for presentations in the nearby Forrestal Auditorium.

Cost is 50 cents for the first minute and 35 cents for each additional minute. For additional information, call Sally Michael, conference director, at (202) 447-3050 or send electronic mail message to AGR072.
